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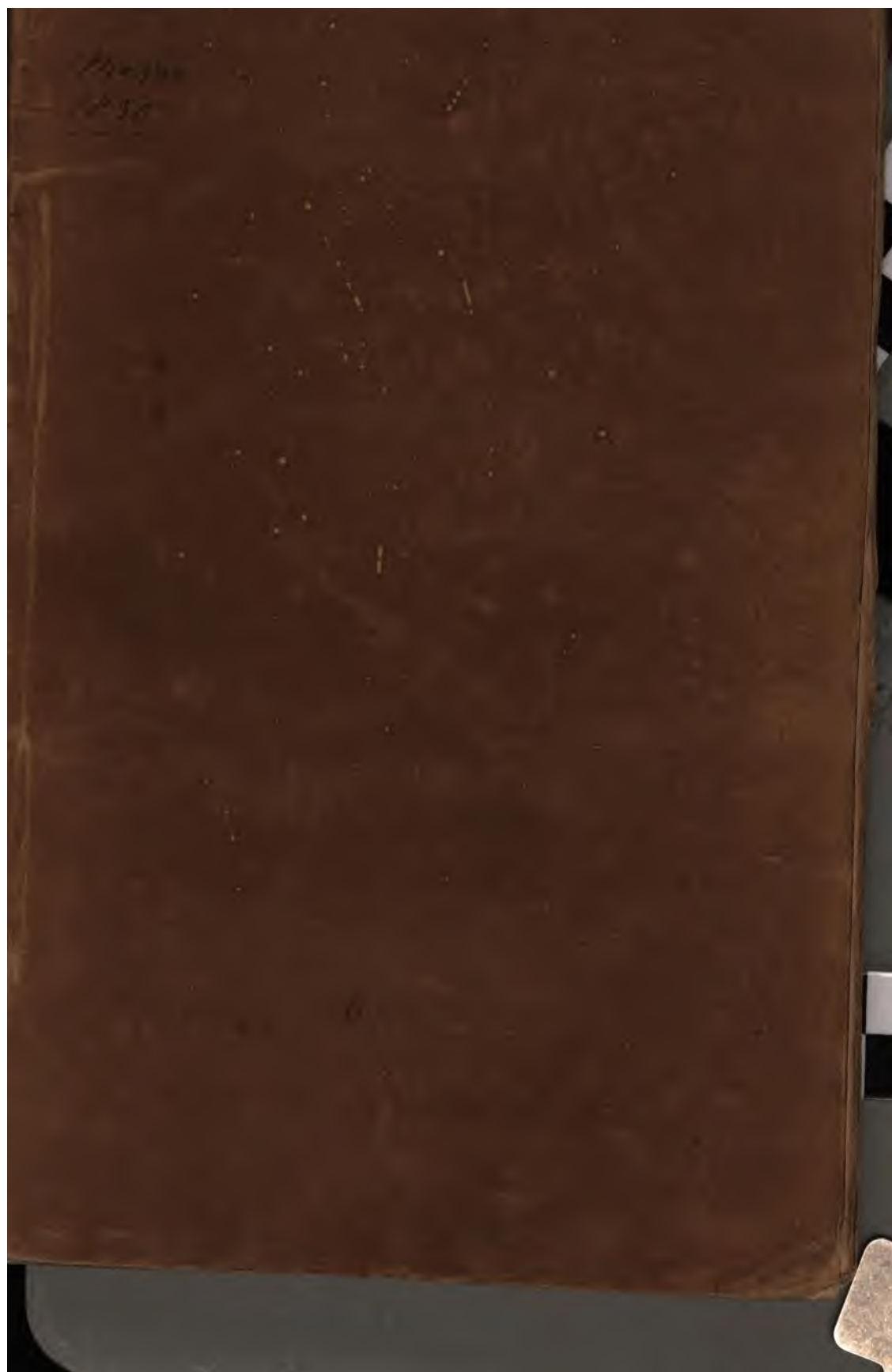
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1830
LETTER

TO

THE BISHOP OF LONDON.

BY

MR. J. M. MORGAN.

SECOND EDITION.

"Unlike your favorite Æschylus I live,
Careless to whom the flattering prize they give;
If Sophocles succeed, or high reward
To Blomfield's splendid talents they award—
Too happy, if those talents I engage,
To aid the people and their grief assuage."

REPROOF OF BRUTUS.



LONDON :

HURST, CHANCE & CO., ST. PAUL'S CHURCH YARD;

AND EFFINGHAM WILSON, ROYAL EXCHANGE.

MDCCCXXX.

PRICE ONE SHILLING AND SIXPENCE.

648.

1821.

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TO THE RIGHT REVEREND
THE LORD BISHOP OF LONDON.

MY LORD,

IT is scarcely possible for any impartial person to peruse your "Letter to the Inhabitants of London and Westminster, on the Profanation of the Sabbath," without feeling a strong impression of the warm interest manifested in the welfare of society at large, and of your firm conviction of the truth of the doctrines advocated, as well as the imperative nature of the obligations arising out of them. It is this impression of your sincere desire to improve the condition of mankind, together with a reliance upon that candour which I perceive you are disposed to extend to every conscientious individual, however widely he may differ in opinion from yourself, that I venture to address your Lordship; and I trust that I shall not

receive less attention because that difference of opinion may prevent me from admitting the principles upon which you have so ably and earnestly argued.

Born, and still residing in your Lordship's diocese, if I have ceased, upon insufficient grounds, to retain those doctrines instilled into my mind in youth, grateful shall I be to him who shall convince me of my error; for I believe that truth alone can be of any service to mankind, and whether it be revealed to us by a sacred volume, or reaches the understanding through any other medium, it must be a direct emanation from the creating power, and it is both our duty and our interest to obey its dictates.

I do not perceive how those who profess the same opinions as your Lordship, can, with consistency, object to this manifestation of your pastoral care. They may, perhaps, think you rather too strict, in prohibiting those who have been confined in unwholesome dwellings the whole week, from enjoying the fresh air on the only day they can consider their own.

It has been lately maintained, that all systems of religion and government, founded upon a notion that the character is formed *by* the individual, and that he can believe and feel as he pleases, are erroneous, and that rewards and punishments, being inconsistent with true princi-

ples, will be found ineffectual. It is to the counteraction of the evils arising from this error, that your strenuous efforts are directed, and it is to be apprehended that they will still be directed in vain, until the error, and its consequent practice, are removed, or other means are resorted to for their mitigation.

But the utility of one day in seven being set apart as a day of rest, in the present constitution of society, must be obvious to all, whether as affording leisure for pious exercises, or for moral and intellectual improvement; but to the believer in particular the sabbatical institution is, in every respect, entitled to his regard; and its observance has, in all ages of the church, been considered as a duty of indispensable and the highest obligation. You have gone so far, as to place almost the very existence of religion itself, upon a proper attention to the appointment:---“ But admitting only,” you say, “ that it is necessary to keep alive a sense of religion in any people, we may safely assume, that this cannot possibly be done without the observance of a Sabbath; and that the end will be answered, in proportion as that observance shall correspond with its intent.”

Let me examine under what circumstances you have found it necessary, by an extraordinary appeal, to enjoin the performance of a duty ad-

mitted by all Christians to be of the first importance.

Should I succeed in convincing you that it is futile to expect attention to religious ordinances, or to moral obligations, by the mere inculcation of precept, without at the same time removing those causes of neglect or obliquity, which are under the control of society, I shall not despair of your powerful influence in overcoming obstacles, although they may not lie within the province of ecclesiastical regulation.

You have remarked, that the evil has been deplored by good and pious men for the last hundred years; but its aggravations cannot be attributed to any remissness on their part, in endeavouring to awaken the attention of their Christian hearers; and you mention one bishop of the last generation, whose name revives the recollection of all that is benevolent in disposition, sincere in profession, and consistent in conduct. If exhortation alone could have availed, the mild but earnest remonstrances of the irreproachable Porteus must have succeeded; but, my Lord, there are circumstances of a more striking character, distinguishing the present period, and which render it still more remarkable that a necessity for your unusual and direct appeal to the inhabitants of the metropolis should exist.

Let us consider a few of these circumstances.

The diocese of London and Westminster was never intrusted to the care of a prelate of more indefatigable zeal than your Lordship. The appointment of bishops has at no former period been determined with so much regard to erudition and piety; nor has the conduct of the clergy, in general, been ever more respectable and exemplary.—“The clergy of the established church,” says the *Christian Guardian*, for January, 1830—“are thus, we trust, advancing in purity of faith and holiness of life. The number of ministers of other denominations has also been exceedingly enlarged; and though it has been said, that instances of deep-devoted personal piety are less common now than in some former periods, yet none can deny that religious knowledge and profession are more generally prevalent now, than in the days which are past.”

Although it must be known to all, that the efforts to extend religious knowledge have, for the last thirty years, been very considerable, yet I was not aware, previous to this inquiry, how much they have been lately increased, through the establishment of Sunday and other schools, and various societies, for the distribution of Tracts, Bibles, &c. nor how much the exertions of the old societies had been re-

animated by the rivalry of others more recently founded.

In a list of annual meetings of fifty-nine societies, to be held in London during the months of April, May, and June, in the present year, I find fifty-five are devoted exclusively to the advancement of religion.

By the last report of "The Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge," no less than one million six hundred and fifty-six thousand and sixty-six Bibles, Testaments, and Tracts, were sold and distributed in one year.

The issues of Bibles and Testaments, by the British and Foreign Bible Society, had rose to two hundred and ninety-four thousand and six, for one year, ending March 31, 1827; in the following year, the number was three hundred and thirty-six thousand two hundred and seventy; and in the year ending March 31, 1829, according to the last report published, three hundred and sixty-five thousand four hundred and twenty-four were distributed.

In Paternoster Row alone, are twelve establishments devoted almost exclusively to the sale of religious works; and in other parts of the town they have proportionally increased.

By the last report of "The Incorporated Society for Promoting the Enlargement, Build-

ing, and Repairing of Churches and Chapels," grants have been made for six hundred and fifteen separate buildings since the year 1819.

Such are the extraordinary circumstances under which it has been found necessary, at this time, to remind, in an unusual manner, the Christian world, of a duty to which the first rank has been assigned by the church, and to the neglect of which the most serious and fatal consequences have been ascribed. Notwithstanding the number of books that have been written to enforce its strict observance, how often has it been announced, that the dying malefactor attributed his first departure from the path of rectitude to a disregard of the Sabbath!

The more urgent and the more frequent those exhortations for the attainment of the object, the more distant seems its accomplishment; nevertheless the zeal of conscientious religionists continues unabated, and affords grounds of hope, that when they are acquainted with practical measures for the support of morality, they will not be slow to adopt them.

Surely, my Lord, after the application of such ample means to enforce religious discipline has failed, and while so much vice and wretchedness prevail and are rapidly increasing, every humane consideration should prompt us to search for other causes of aberration.

If I am to be told by others, that the causes to which I shall advert are subjects unsuited to the investigation of the clergy, I must then entreat your attention as an individual sympathising in the distresses of your fellow creatures.

But I do not think your Lordship will make use of that argument, for you have already given a sanction to the consideration of causes beyond the pale of the church, if indeed there can be any, which affect, however indirectly, the moral character, when you comment upon the low price of British spirits, as one powerful cause of the lamentable increase of drunkenness;* and more especially when you justly observe, "in the cause of morality no help is to be despised." But I feel myself still further justified, in requesting your attention to these causes, while I peruse the examination of your Lordship, when Bishop of Chester, by the Committee of Emigration, appointed by the House of Commons in 1827.

In the information given by you to the committee, is evinced such an accurate knowledge of the commercial causes of poverty, as could have been derived only from the most diligent inquiry; and that poverty is the principal cause

* Page 12, 13.

of immorality among the working classes, the report of every committee of the House of Commons, appointed to investigate the subject, bears ample testimony. In your reply to the question, "What is the population from whom the poor-rate is levied?" you state, as chairman of the London Committee for the relief of the manufacturing districts—"As far as we can collect from our returns, all but the poorest are assessed for the relief of the very poorest, such as in the parish of Bethnal Green, where the poor have been supporting the poor, till at last they are no longer able to go on, and now the parish is borrowing money."

It must be already seen, that it is not to entreaty and precept that I object, but to the disregard of those counteracting circumstances, which generate feelings hostile to the wisest lessons of instruction. On the very day upon which I first took up your Lordship's Letter, I found the remark by Sir Richard Birnie, in the newspaper, that in the neighbourhood of St. Giles's, there was at least a population of ten thousand persons, ready for any sort of mischief* ; and why

* "Sir R. Birnie asked him for his licence.—Mr. Smith said he really had it not about him ; he had preached thirteen years in Covent Garden, and had never met with an interruption before.—Sir R. Birnie : ' Then it is my duty to

are they thus ready for mischief? Not, as has been shewn, from the neglect of religious exhortation ; but because they have been abandoned to the influence of circumstances, the existence of which should not be tolerated in any country, having any pretensions to civilization or religion. Can you seriously believe that any better example, which the circulation of your Letter may give rise to, among the few of the wealthy whom you may succeed in calling over to a sense of duty, will ope-

tell you now, that you have no right, with or without a licence, to preach in the open air after sunset ; and as long as I continue a magistrate in this district, I will prevent it: having given you this warning, you may depart.'—Mr. Smith 'The Scriptures tell me to go forth and preach the word of God, and as long as I have strength I will do so. You are a magistrate, Sir R. Birnie, and as such I respect you, but the Scriptures teach me this.'—Sir R. Birnie: 'My good sir, I respect your feelings—they are no doubt very good and very proper ; but I cannot suffer you to preach in such a place as Charing Cross, which is within a very short distance of St. Giles's, where a population of at least ten thousand persons, ready for any sort of mischief, whether to break heads or pick pockets, might be collected at a moment's warning.' Mr. Smith, after an ineffectual attempt to persuade the chief magistrate, that no mischief could possibly arise from the exercise of his holy calling, was told that he might depart ; and he left the office, declaring his determination to preach the word of God, when and wherever he could."—*Times*, May 7, 1830

rate upon this mass, to whom the proceedings of the great are as unknown as those of their antipodes ? Then surely some other means should be resorted to, to give effect to your benevolent intentions.

I feel, my Lord, some difficulty in proceeding with this subject, without seeming to doubt your conviction of the obvious truth of the force of circumstances in moulding the character ; yet such is the utter neglect which this great truth has experienced from all parties, that I am constrained to believe, that obvious as it may appear to some, it is overlooked by others. As a disciple of Socrates once extricated ten thousand Greeks from surrounding dangers, in a distant country, let us hope that some disciple of a system professing a still higher morality may be found to lead the ten thousand out of dangers no less real---dangers not created by their hostile invasion of a foreign land, but by the usurpation of their own by a few, whose ancestors too successfully called in the aid of religion, to sanction claims based upon injustice.

Is it not lamentable, my Lord, to witness the filth and wretchedness of the inmates of these crowded and miserable lanes and alleys, and to behold in the neighbouring squares, the riot and luxury of those who have driven them from the fields of nature, for which they have, themselves, no enjoyment ?

If any inconvenience is experienced by the aristocracy from existing laws, they are speedily altered; but when the great mass of the people are not merely inconvenienced, but even their moral condition deeply and injuriously affected, by laws which the few imagine to be favourable to themselves, these laws are held inviolable, and the miseries of the people deplored as the inscrutable dispensations of Providence, when an act of parliament would at once remedy the evil.

Having recognized the principle of political interference on the part of the dignitaries of the church, so far as suggestion may go, in deprecating the low price of British spirits, as increasing temptation to evil, it is hoped that every other law and institution, having an injurious tendency, will be denounced; and more especially, those of which the consequences are more extended and severe. And are there not laws in existence which prevent the ten thousand from going forth to till the soil, which nature intended as the common property of all, and of contributing to their own support? When the district in which the ten thousand are crowded together, is viewed from the summit of your cathedral, the spectator easily conceives the impossibility of any arrangement of circumstances being formed within such narrow limits, as can be conducive to physical and moral improvement, even if the miserable in-

habitants had other means essential to such an object.

The monopoly of land is the great impediment to the moral improvement of the people; and it is melancholy to witness, at this time, the thousands who are driven from their native shores, upon the uncertain scheme of emigration, while the chief cause of our difficulty at home is the excess of production beyond the demand.

If intoxication be increased by the greater facility of obtaining British spirits, and many recent occurrences at the police offices have confirmed your opinion, so is the intoxication of power, by facilitating the means of gratification. But it is not in the district of St. Giles's alone, to which my attention has been accidentally drawn, that I wish to direct your observation. There is no part of society in which the evil consequences of superfluous wealth, and extreme poverty, do not directly or indirectly extend.

It is probable that you are too much occupied by the arduous affairs of your extensive and thickly peopled diocese, to devote sufficient time to the examination of other causes of delinquency, and the consequence is, that your attention is confined chiefly to effects. Of the two methods by which misconduct and crime may be diminished, the one is, *by increasing in the individual the power of resisting temptation*—the other, *the removal of*

the temptation itself. The former is that to which the efforts of the clergy are exclusively directed; nor do modern legislators look beyond. Hence their reliance upon police improvements, punishment, &c. The second, the removal of temptation, although the most important, is disregarded by all, notwithstanding there are more urgent reasons at this time why it should excite their greatest solicitude.

The rapid increase in the scientific power of production, while it has augmented the aggregate wealth of the country, has tended also to concentrate that wealth in the hands of the few; for, by reducing the value directly of manual labour, and indirectly of every species of employment, it has multiplied the difficulties and disappointments of all classes, not excepting even the wealthy themselves. Competition has reduced profits, and rendered it difficult for the smaller shopkeepers to get sufficient for a bare subsistence; those in the lowest grade are tempted, in order to avoid starvation, to open their shops on Sunday; and I have no doubt if the gentleman who, you say, "personally inspected various streets, and public avenues, to the north-west of the metropolis, counted no less than four hundred and seventy-three shops, of various trades, open for business on the Lord's Day, besides, stalls for fruits, and other articles of consumption,"

had inquired minutely into their circumstances, he would have been more inclined to pity their forlorn condition, and would have admired their endeavours to preserve their families from absolute want, by honest and patient industry, rather than by fraud and violence.

The resort to wine vaults and gin shops, so much to be regretted, is not wholly attributable to the low price of British spirits; for while it is admitted that the price has been diminished, the means of purchase have been diminished in a still greater degree. Poverty and despair will too often, drive the wretched to those resources which, although they may afford relief to their misery for a short period, eventually aggravate their sufferings. The female dishonesty and profligacy, which you with so much reason deplore, are always found to increase in time of commercial difficulty, as the Parliamentary Reports will confirm; plainly indicating that idleness and poverty, arising from inability to obtain employment, is the chief cause.

It is not surprising, if parents struggling day after day to earn, by their hard labour, a scanty pittance; or who, if they have no employment, must be diligently seeking it, have not sufficient time (even if their own moral character has withstood the strong temptations to which they have been exposed, and left them the inclination)

to attend to the improvement of their children ; and too probably, “ the youthful profligates of both sexes,” assembled “ for the purpose of fighting, pigeon-shooting, gambling, and all kinds of improper pastime,” are the children of those very persons who have been compelled to continue their avocations on the Sabbath.

The principles which appear to me to be true, compel me to admit an extenuation for the conduct of every individual, whatever his rank or condition in society ; but were I to reason upon popular and false grounds, I should then maintain, that less excuse is to be found for the rich. I do not, however, concur with those who object that your Letter evinces any subservience to them ; for you attribute a disregard of the Sabbath on the part of the poorer classes, to the example set them by the wealthy, and in the outset you particularly state,* “ It is not, however, solely, nor even principally, to the lower orders of society, that the following observations are addressed.”

Having endeavoured to shew that poverty is the chief cause of the irregularities of which you complain, among those who are denominated the lower orders, let us next inquire, what is the real cause of a neglect of duty with the higher. I have already adverted to the increased exertions,

and superior character of the clergy, and we must now be convinced, that it is owing to no deficiency in zeal, on their part; yet, with these exertions, enormities are said to be on the advance among the higher classes. "I cannot forbear," you observe, "from taking this opportunity of lifting up my voice, ineffectually, I am too well aware, against the scandalous and shameless manner in which the gaming-houses are now resorted to, on the Christian Sabbath. The number of these dens of infamy, these monuments of splendid profligacy, is *every year increasing*." As abject poverty has led to vice in the former case, so shall we find that excess of wealth has produced it in the latter.

To descant at this time upon the vices of those who fare sumptuously every day, would be to dwell upon a topic so old and worn out, that it is no more heeded by mankind in general than the passing wind. But your Lordship, I must again repeat, has justly remarked, "that in the cause of morality no help is to be despised;" and whether a topic be old or new, it should be reiterated until its truth, if it contain any, is fully recognised and acted upon. Could abundance at all times be accompanied by intelligence, and under a rational system they would never be separated, wisdom and happiness, and not folly and misery, would be the result. Religion is found equally ineffi-

cacious in attempting to oppose the solicitations of pride and luxury, when unaided by other means to subdue the excitements to which their votaries are exposed. But if it shall be found that religion, instead of advocating the abolition of laws originating in the darkest ages of ignorance, and established by force and fraud, is employed in confirming privileges injurious to the few who possess them, and still more so to the rest of the community---if the dignitaries of the church are yielding support to partial institutions which have been ascertained to be the principal cause of the errors and vices denounced from the pulpit, one portion of the clergy will be tacitly counteracting or increasing the labours of the other; and vain will it be to expect any but troubled water, if the stream is not purified at the fountain head. Surely, my Lord, nothing is so much calculated to impair respect for religious institutions, as a suspicion that it is from them that unjust laws must “ultimately derive their real force;” for although the excellent characters who now fill the highest ecclesiastical stations are unconscious of the existence of practical remedies for the evils that afflict society—and the increasing claims upon the diligent discharge of the functions of their office leave them no time for the examination of the principles and practices of a better system—yet the

people, the more they become oppressed and exasperated by those laws, are less likely to give due weight to these considerations.

I have appended to this Letter, an Address delivered at the Theatre of the Mechanics' Institution, in reference to the Sunday Morning Lectures, instituted for the diffusion of the knowledge of moral and social science. The idea of the organization of a community of united and equal interests, where individuals are trained and educated from infancy in accordance with that principle, is, of course, not new to your Lordship; who probably, in common with other scholars, have, in your earlier days, first admired the beauty, and then lamented the impracticability, of the schemes of Plato, More, and Bacon. But although those great characters were unable, through the insufficiency of knowledge and experience in their respective eras, to perfect a system, yet their general principle was true, and has at length assumed a practical and durable form. It is not, however, to be supposed, that the present generation, with all its acquired habits, opinions, and injurious passions, their ignorance or partial knowledge, can be qualified for a superior constitution of society, much less can we suppose that the different classes could be at once amalgamated.

Should your Lordship not admit the possi-

bility of establishing a community where the private and public interest shall be so united, in the mind of each individual, as to become the undeviating rule of his conduct; or, admitting the correctness of the principles, you deem any attempt to act upon them premature; permit me to suggest four distinct and separate plans, by which each class of society may derive great advantages, without the surrender of their present habits and opinions; and whether considered as an advance towards a superior state of society, or merely as an improvement of the present, I think they will be found unobjectionable, and if sanctioned by your approval and patronage, would soon gain acceptance with the public.

The first plan for the higher and middle classes of society, I have recently circulated in the following

SUGGESTION,

For a Club upon an extended scale, for the attainment of all the objects of superior Society, in the immediate vicinity of London.

If a College, of the size of one of the largest squares, were erected, surrounded by a park and gardens, and sufficiently capacious for the accommodation of four hundred families, whose

incomes did not exceed £200, and each family paid a rent of £100, the rental would amount to £40,000, requiring an outlay of £800,000. This sum might be raised by shares, which would afford a safe and profitable investment, even for those who had no desire to become occupants.

It is perfectly demonstrable, that each family, expending the remainder of their income (£100 per annum,) under such arrangements, would derive far greater advantages than could be yielded by an income of £600 per annum, in an establishment for one family only ; for, besides procuring, in a superior degree, their present objects including education for their children, they could have libraries, theatres, and philosophical apparatus for lectures, music and ball-rooms, baths, gymnasia, and whatever belongs to the highest physical and mental cultivation.

The same economy, though with less advantages, would obtain, in an outlay of £400,000, for an equal number of families, with £100 per annum.

But, if an income of £500 were expended upon the same principle, the advantages would equal those of an individual establishment of £5000, as the benefits increase in a greater ratio from the increased expenditure.

It is equally demonstrable, that those collisions of interests, or incompatibilities of disposition,

which militate against the friendly union of two or more families in one dwelling, would, by the comprehensiveness of the establishment, be entirely avoided; while the privacy of separate houses, or of two apartments for each adult, male and female, with the choice of taking their refreshments in them, or in the grand dining-hall, collectively, or in different parties, together with the right of leaving the Society at a quarter's notice, would afford the same liberty as is now enjoyed.

Under this plan of combined expenditure only, there is no necessity for *productive* employment—unless, for the sake of beneficial exercise for themselves and children, the members should desire to cultivate their own gardens.

A model of one of these colleges is now placed in the saloon of the Colosseum in the Regent's Park. By the description it will be seen how much the economy of the arrangements abridges, and renders agreeable to the young, employment in the domestic offices. Children delight in being occupied, especially in numbers, and when they understand that their employment is useful, there is scarcely any domestic service, which the youth between the ages of seven and sixteen, with all the aids which modern science can afford, would not with ease, and as an amusement, perform; while, in reality, it would become an essential part

of their education, in the true signification of the term. Families with limited incomes could thus dispense with servants altogether.

However extraordinary may be the pecuniary advantages of the foregoing plan, they bear no comparison with its moral effects. It combines the pleasures of a town and country residence, without the disadvantages of either; the accommodations and intelligent society of the former, with the fresh air and exercise of the latter; to the advantages of a private, are united those of a public education, and of an university. The clubs hitherto established have had the effect of excluding one sex, before too much separated, from the intellectual pursuits of the other. This plan brings them forward, and gives them a voice upon subjects no less interesting to women than to men, and in a knowledge of which, their participation is absolutely essential to the well being and happiness of society. Perhaps there could not be found a more salutary restraint upon the conduct of adults, than the frequent opportunities that would be afforded them, of witnessing the process of education, and the progress of the children; nothing so well calculated to teach them to seek improving pleasures, and to entice them from horse-racing and gaming, as to be called upon to deliberate upon projected improvements in instruction. Increased attraction could be given to scientific inquiry by

magnificent orreries, the large globes lately exhibited at Paris, superior solar microscopes, and other aids to philosophical illustration, and such as no private fortune, however splendid, could command. The powerful impulse which such exhibitions and aids would have in stimulating the useful curiosity of the children, must be obvious. The concerts also could be conducted upon a scale of magnitude, and with an effect, beyond the reach of any private entertainment.

This association would also enable the children of the middle and higher classes of society, to enjoy the benefit of an infant school, which has hitherto been confined to the working classes.

THE second plan, for the labouring classes, is as follows :—

Squares to be erected within two miles of London, or within a more convenient distance, for the residence of those employed during the day in the cities of London and Westminster. If four proprietors agree to build a square, each may undertake one side, which would remain separate and independent property ; or if eight united, then half the side of a square would belong to each landlord. This arrangement would do away with any risk of partnership. At the upper end of the square,

large school-rooms should be built ; the ground floor to be used as an infant school, the upper floor for children more advanced.

The expense of building these rooms could be borne jointly by the proprietors, or if built by one person, he could let it to the inhabitants.

The dwelling apartments, light, convenient, and airy, and equally independent, would be taken by the working classes, in preference to the close and unwholesome rooms in narrow dirty alleys, where the children, if not an incumbrance to their mothers, are running about, without superintendence, in the streets. Under the proposed arrangements, the children, when not engaged in the schools, would be playing in the square, and at all times within sight of their parents or teachers. One of the inhabitants could receive the rents weekly, having a small compensation for his trouble.

The school-rooms would be used for lectures in the evening, and a small library could be attached ; in short, almost any object of general interest, such as their benefit sick clubs, and other societies of mutual assistance, could be there formed.

The contiguity of this building to their own dwellings would enable their wives and children to participate in the instructive amusements of the evening, which would be well calculated to supersede the attractions of the public house.

There they could establish their own stores, and in a short time, bake their own bread, and brew their own beer, and perhaps supply the neighbourhood. This arrangement would be found advantageous, not only in the vicinity of cities and large towns, but also in the agricultural districts, as distinct gardens could be allotted to each family, and even separate cottages, provided they were sufficiently near for the children to be under the continual observation of their parents or instructors, and near the school.

In the Rev. Daniel Wilson's reply to a request of the parishioners of Islington, to take the chair at a meeting convened for the purpose of forming "A Mutual Assurance Society," by which the labouring classes can assist each other in old age, sickness, and infirmity, is this judicious remark:—"For it is impossible, I think, not to see, that if two hundred or more persons will form a society for mutual aid, on correct principles, each one will know, that whenever he falls sick, he shall have two hundred friends to hold him; and that during the years of health, he will have the gratification of affording to others the aid which he requires from time to time himself." And why should they not unite for the preservation also of health, as well as for recovery from sickness, for sanity of mind, and for all the objects of ra-

tional existence? It is this comprehensive union that is wanted for the suppression of vice, and for the support of virtue.

THERE still remains another class which more than any other demands attention—those who are willing and able to work, but can procure no employment. If the plan of united interests is objected to, they must have separate allotments of land, and be allowed to supply their own wants, with that just regard to their feelings, which every principle of humanity or of true religion can suggest. The efficacy of this mode of relief has been fully confirmed by the success of similiar experiments in Holland; the details of which have been too long before the public to need any commentary now. Their efficacy, however, will be found far inferior to small communities of mutual assistance, in which the individual and general interest are united.

THE fourth measure I beg to recommend, comes under the immediate control of your Lordship. The superior manners of the peasantry of France are attributed to the access which is afforded them to the galleries of art, and to their cathe-

drals, where the sublimity of the building, and the elevating expression of the paintings, and the music, are calculated to refine their taste. On the other hand, their levity is to be ascribed to the variety of theatrical and other entertainments of dissipation. There would be no difficulty in uniting their urbanity and cheerfulness with a solidity of character.

Our churches, supported by large contributions, are closed six days out of the seven, unless when occasionally occupied for public or vestry meetings, upon which occasions feelings are excited, and expressions used, painful and revolting to many. Surely then there could be no objection to their occupation for peaceful and instructive objects. I would, therefore, with deference, suggest, that during each week-day the church should be opened for the purpose of instruction, and in the evening for lectures on the sciences, under the direction of the clergy. If it could be made a parochial object, or if the middling and higher classes were to contribute according to their means and inclination, it is evident that they could provide an intellectual and moral entertainment upon a scale of great magnificence. One evening in the week an oratorio could be performed, when gratuitous musicians would probably be found among the parishioners. These pursuits would not rob religion of its votaries, but the taverns, the gaming tables,

the race-course, the public houses and gin shops*. The rich would partake of amusements, in magnitude and effect, far superior to the private assemblies of the most wealthy ; nor would they enjoy them less, because others participated in them. There would be no premature mixture of classes, as each class could occupy the same pews and seats as on a Sunday. At the same time, the improvements which would take place in the character and manners of the working classes, would gradually fit them for the enjoyment of more cultivated society ; and the wealthy would acquire a greater sympathy for those whom they frequently saw gratified with the same objects as themselves. They would also feel an interest in the education of the children, and would learn, that as their pleasures had been heightened by the degree of sympathy already created, that the fruition of happiness could alone be accomplished by removing every obstacle to universal benevolence. Soon would they be desirous of training all the rising

* “ It has been, and ever will be found far more easy to lead mankind to virtue, or to rational conduct, by providing them with well regulated innocent amusements and recreations, than by forcing them to submit to useless restraints, which tend only to create disgust, and often to connect such feelings even with that which is excellent in itself, merely because it has been injudiciously associated.”—*Owen's Essays.*

generation upon a principle of equal enjoyment, so far as superior education and equitable institutions could accomplish such an object.

THE four plans I have submitted to your consideration, have all a tendency *to increase the power of resisting temptation, and to remove the temptation itself*, or, which is in effect the same, to withdraw the individual from pernicious influence. With the opinions I entertain, it is possible that, even without intending it, I may have suggested measures calculated to contravene the doctrines you inculcate. Disliking every insidious course, I have attentively reviewed them, and I do not find any part which is not calculated to give increased effect to moral and religious instruction, unless a more extended acquaintance with the laws of nature should compel a different conviction on the minds of individuals; in which case, I am sure you would not regret it, as those laws must of necessity be true, and have not been liable to the contingences to which the tradition of remote ages have been necessarily exposed. Nor do I think that there is any part of the proposals unacceptable to the public generally, as they have originated in a careful consid-

ration of their present habits, feelings, and opinions. The novelty of them may perhaps prevent immediate acquiescence, but a little reflection, and the suggestion of some modifications by others, will soon reconcile all to measures which may augment the general happiness, and lead to still further improvements.

It is almost universally admitted that an important change in society is on the eve of taking place, although few have any notion as to what the nature of that change will be. The sanguinary consequences of the French Revolution must convince us of the danger of avoiding too pertinaciously the examination of those innovations which the progress of knowledge demands, and how much more conducive to public prosperity, is the tranquil introduction of necessary improvements by the constituted authorities themselves. It is, therefore, desirable, in the present state of the public mind, that the clergy should retain that control over the churches which they possess; and in order that nothing indecorous should occur, that any use which should be made of them, be under their superintendence and direction.

Before concluding, permit me to add a few words respecting a system which is now beginning to attract considerable attention. This system, which has obtained the familiar appellation of "Co-operative," has for its basis, "uni-

versal justice and unbounded benevolence;" it admits of no law or regulation which cannot be demonstrably proved to be conducive, directly or indirectly, to the growth of all the virtues; it discards every exclusive privilege whatever; it enables man with ease, and in a short time, to supply his animal wants; while it so trains him, as to create a desire for temperate gratification only. Thus is the time devoted to his animal nature much abridged, and ample leisure left for the improvement and delightful exercise of his higher faculties; for the application of the various new methods of facilitating instruction, in which the present age abounds; and for the formation of superior characters—far from reducing any, it elevates all; it teaches the man of genius, and those whom nature has gifted with extraordinary talent, that by communicating their advantages freely to all, their own happiness will be best consulted, and the welfare of the community promoted; it teaches, that all who are least favoured by nature, either physically or mentally, and even those whose disposition is the worst, have the strongest claims upon the attention, commiseration, and solicitude of the community; it strengthens the weak, and gives a right direction to the energies of the strong; it refers the solution of every question to the unerring decision of justice and benevolence, and is therefore throughout consistent;

it seeks no support from the axioms, perhaps incorrectly recorded, of wise and good men, who existed before the matured experience of the world had developed the true principles of society, unless they will bear the test of reason and of equal justice ; but if they are not found wanting, when estimated by this standard, they are admitted as indisputable truths, not of mere speculation, but for practical adoption, from whatever quarter they may come ; “ Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them,” is a maxim full of wisdom, justice, and benevolence, not only for guidance in private life, but in the government of nations. If, with a constant reference to this golden rule, society were to be remodelled, not a few of our laws would give place to more equitable institutions : and surely it is incumbent upon those who advocate the paramount importance of the Gospel, to insist upon the abrogation of every law that is not in strict accordance with its spirit. I have the honour to be,

Your Lordship's

Most obedient humble servant,

JOHN MINTER MORGAN.



ADDRESS

DELIVERED BY

Mr. J. M. MORGAN,

AT THE

THEATRE OF THE MECHANICS' INSTITUTION,

On THURSDAY, MAY 6, 1830.

In order to convey a correct idea of the motives which led to the Institution, of the Sunday Morning Lectures, I will repeat the preliminary Address, intended for the First Meeting held upon that day.

WHEN a departure from established custom is made, by the announcement of a public meeting on this day, not expressly for a religious object, so far as the term religion implies subscription to a particular creed, it may be expected that the motives which have led to that departure, should be explicitly avowed. It is due to the conductors of this Institution, that that statement which induced them to grant the use of their Theatre, should be given to society at large; and this has become more particularly necessary, as inaccurate information

has already misled some of the writers in the public journals. The grounds upon which the application was made to the committee, were, that many individuals, who, from their earliest years, had been accustomed to attend their church, but whose conscientious change of opinion had compelled them to discontinue the practice, were desirous of uniting with others of congenial mind, for the purpose of mutual and general improvement. Whatever opinions they might now entertain, regarding the doctrines in which they were educated, it could not be denied, that amid the scene of strife and contention, which, in a greater or less degree, pervades every part of the present constitution of society, that must be a salutary ordinance which occasionally suspends the contest, and affords leisure for reflection. The advocates of a superior order of society are still compelled to live under a system, of competition, no less opposed to the spirit of Christianity, than to the principles they profess : alike exposed to the temptations and annoyances, adverse to their true interests, whatever may be the strength of their convictions as to the formation of character, they are liable, from their previous habits, to forget those considerations which should induce forbearance, and a constant regard for others. The still higher object is contemplated, of extending more widely,

by means of Lectures, a knowledge of those principles, which could alone secure, upon an immutable basis, the permanent happiness of mankind.

Such was the substance of the general views mentioned at my interview with the committee of management of the Mechanics' Institution, and the advertisement I had prepared was as follows:

“Sunday Morning—Lectures on the moral and social duties of man, founded on the laws of his nature, and essential to a superior order of society.

“Sunday Afternoon—Meetings of class, for instruction in the true principles of society, by question and answer, and familiar and private explanation.

“Sunday Evening—Lectures on anatomy and physiology, also on astronomy, geography, chemistry, and the various branches of natural history.”

But as Mr. Owen proposed commencing a course himself, he substituted the words which appear in the bills that are circulated, and which, although they refer to his own Lectures, are in substance the same.

In order that the real objects, as well as the spirit of the lectures proposed to be instituted, may be more fully understood, I will detain you a very short time with an extract

from a paper intended to have been read at the commencement of the lectures.

As it is proposed to render these meetings beneficial to all, and more especially to the rising generation, and as collision of opinion sometimes engenders feelings of irritation, no discussion will be encouraged; but other opportunities will be afforded for canvassing the principles advocated. It will also be more consistent with the order of our proceedings, that any tumultuous or audible expression, either of approbation or disapprobation, should be suppressed—that we should preserve the same decorum as prevails at the most solemn assemblies; convinced that the objects for which we are met, transcend all others in importance; that we are fulfilling our highest obligations, while we endeavour to inculcate the moral and social duties, not in connection with doctrines of doubtful disputation, but derived from the irreversible laws of human nature. With this confidence in the stability and magnitude of the work in which we are engaged, let us strive incessantly to keep alive a sense of its immeasurable importance: if a consciousness of the omnipresence of the Deity is calculated to check the rising passions, and to impress the mind with a deeper sense of duty, equally so is the omnipresence of a truth fraught

with consequences in which the improvement and future wellbeing of the rising generation, nay, of ourselves, and of the whole human race, are involved—a truth, through the promulgation of which the complicated miseries of society may be speedily banished, and folly, vice, and wretchedness, be replaced by wisdom, virtue, and happiness. The object of the lecturer, imbued with those feelings which correct knowledge can alone impart, will not be to attack that which is false, but to illustrate that which is true; if, however, at any time, there should be a necessity to trace the causes and consequences of error, no vituperation will be heard, for in all cases error will be recognised as the result of previous and existing circumstances, over which the individual committing it, either in word or deed, had no control; and it will be referred to as a beacon for future avoidance, and not as a subject for animadversion.

If it is true that the character is formed *for*, and not *by*, the individual, then are the most grievous oppressors, the most bigoted and persecuting zealots, as blameless as their conscientious victims. Justice then demands that we should regard them, not with a vindictive spirit, which serves to provoke resentment, and to render them more tenacious of error, but as fellow beings, having the same common interest with

ourselves, and erring through the defects of education, and the influence of imperfect institutions.

Can we, possessing the common feelings of our nature, and a knowledge of the means by which the motives to the commission of crime may be removed, behold, day after day, criminals borne away to punishment or execution, and yet be silent? With a knowledge of the means by which all could have an ample supply, can we supinely hear, resounding on all sides, the cries of privation and distress? Acquainted with those laws and institutions which will call into well-directed action the noblest faculties of our nature, must we behold the worst passions continually excited, and yet suppress the truth, in deference to mistaken judgments? History is fertile in examples of men, who in the sacred cause of truth have endured the scoffs of ignorance, and braved the hostility of superstition; but where, in the records of all past ages, can we distinguish the development of a truth so full of delightful promise, as that which proclaims, that the belief and affections are not under the government of the individual, conferring at once upon society the power of moulding the character and of ruling the future destinies of man? a truth which, in its mighty consequences, will surpass the united effects of the accumulated researches of ages.

If in earlier times a comparatively insignificant truth was capable of calling forth energies that commanded the admiration of the world, and enabled its advocates to endure with fortitude the agonies of torture, shall we shrink from the discharge of our highest duties, from the apprehension of a little personal inconvenience? for as those minor truths might have been expected to supply a less stimulus to perilous enterprise, so were the dangers an hundredfold greater, than those which now threaten the announcement of new discoveries, either from the alarms of fanaticism, or of arbitrary power.

He who honestly and fearlessly renounces opinions opposed to the conviction of his understanding, is no longer immured in the dungeon, or led in ignominy to the stake; and although he may be overtaken by the persecution of private antipathy and public reproach, and must be prepared for the sacrifice, involuntary on his part, of some of his early friendships, and too often for the estrangement of his nearest connections, he will still be recompensed by the sympathy of liberal and enlightened minds, and will retain that which he values above all price---the heartfelt satisfaction of an approving conscience. Brief, however, may be the duration, even of these mitigated sufferings for truth's sake. There are signs in the times brighter

and more exhilarating than ever cheered the most ardent expectations of hope. The long dark night of ignorance is fast expiring; the day is near at hand, when the few lingering prejudices will take their final departure; and when those who are now regarded as the deluded and mischievous advocates of incredulity, will be esteemed the benefactors of the human race.

How unavailing are all our boasted acquisitions in literature and the arts, how barren our admiration of the classic ages, if we cease to imitate the recorded instances of noble daring! It is not by swimming across the Hellespont, or wielding the sword and javelin, at a period when wars are about to terminate, that we can display any genuine sympathy with the glorious characters of ancient Greece and Rome, but rather by considering what would have been their conduct had they lived in our own days; and having ascertained the path of duty, boldly to advance. Moral courage is the virtue the exercise of which can now be of essential service to mankind; this therefore is the greatest and most exalted virtue---this alone is wanted to enable man to enter upon a career of improvement, the result of which cannot be contemplated by the least sanguine without filling the mind with astonishment and delight. This is not the language of enthusiasim but of patient

and often repeated investigation, and of a deep-rooted conviction of the truths of a science intensely interesting, since it comprehends the most direct and effectual means of promoting all the others, and of whatever is justly held in high estimation. 'The long reign of error in the world,' says professor Stewart, 'and the influence it maintains, even in an age of liberal inquiry, far from being favourable to the supposition, that human reason is destined to be for ever the sport of prejudice and absurdity, demonstrates the tendency which there is to permanence in established opinions, and in established institutions; and promises an eternal stability to true philosophy, when it shall once have acquired the ascendant, and when proper means shall be employed to support it by a more perfect system of education. Let us suppose, that this happy era were arrived, and that all the prepossessions of childhood and youth were directed to support the pure and sublime truths of an enlightened morality, with what ardour, and with what transport, would the understanding, when arrived at maturity, proceed in the search of truth, when, instead of being obliged to struggle at every step with early prejudices, its office was merely to add the force of philosophical conviction to impressions which are equally delightful to imagination, and dear to

the heart !' It is in support of the just morality here so beautifully described, that these Lectures have been instituted.

There are few who have conscientiously discharged their minds of the errors of a false education, who will not acknowledge the pain they have experienced in the disruption of early associations, and who will not lament the sacrifices of time they have made in searching for evidence in defence of long-cherished opinions, which they were compelled at last to resign. To instil into the minds of children disputed doctrines for incontrovertible truths, is to take advantage of the helplessness of infancy, to enfeeble the powers of judgment, by enlisting their feelings possibly on the side of error, and keeping them, unless emancipated by some fortunate circumstances, for ever ignorant of truth.

To enable man to comprehend his relation to the objects by which he is surrounded, and to improve him in his social capacity, his mind cannot be too enlightened ; he must become acquainted with his own nature and with all the material existences within the range of his observation. As all error is vice, and as virtue is derived from truth, his happiness can be alone secured through the acquisition of real knowledge.

Let us not listen to the timid suggestions of those who would counsel a cautious policy in the

developement of truth. Shall we, who court inquiry in the open day, proceed with the fear and trembling of those who harbour opinions they dare not candidly avow? It is only by following the illustrious example of him whose inductive sagacity, devoted throughout life to the cause of humanity, has at length happily combined the elements of the social system, and given it a place among the acknowledged sciences. It is only by a distinct, ingenuous, and unhesitating declaration of the truth, not in a spirit of provocation, but with a sincere and obvious desire to excite a friendly attention, and benefit mankind, that we can ever hope for ultimate success.

To conclude, in the words of an eloquent writer, "Whoever has attentively meditated on the progress of the human race, cannot fail to discern, that there is now a spirit of inquiry amongst men, which nothing can stop, or even materially control. Reproach and obloquy, threats and persecution, will be vain. They may imbitter opposition and engender violence, but they cannot abate the keenness of research. There is a silent march of thought, which no power can arrest, and which it is not difficult to foresee, will be marked by important events. Mankind were never before in the situation in which they now stand. The press has been operating upon them for several centuries, with an influence scarcely perceptible

at its commencement, but daily beoming more palpable, and acquiring accelerated force. It is rousing the intellect of nations; and happy will it be for them, if there be no rash interference with the natural progress of knowledge; and if by a judicious and gradual adaptation of their institutions to the inevitable changes of opinion, they are saved from those convulsions which the pride, prejudices, and obstinacy of a few, may occasion to the whole.

SINCE the Address which I have just read was brought forward on Sunday week, a meeting of the governors and subscribers of the King's College has been held, at which that highly-distinguished and respectable prelate Dr. Blomfield introduced into his speech the following remark :—

“ The council had fulfilled the pledge given, to found in this metropolis (the population of which were not supplied with the means of sound education) an institution erected upon those principles maintained by the united church of England and Ireland; for all other sciences and acquirements ought to be held subservient to those principles of action furnished by the doctrines of the Gospel. In strict conformity to these views, the charter had

been procured, favouring the combination of all the useful branches of education with the doctrines of the church of England and Ireland. It was there enacted, that in order to maintain these doctrines in perpetuity, no one should have a voice in the direction of the affairs of the College who did not stand pledged to the principles of the church of England ; and this provision had not been made with an uncandid and illiberal feeling, but in self-defence, and in consistency, not forcing individuals to embrace particular doctrines, or find fault with those already taught ; but holding, as they did, peculiar tenets—those whose minds were not yet formed, they should imbue with them ; leaving them, however, to their free choice, when reason had arrived at maturity.”

The principle here laid down by his Lordship would, if generally acted upon, go far to perpetuate the errors in all the various religions in the world ; for if each parent is to consider himself justified in forcing, prematurely, upon the mind of his child, whatever theological opinions he may have imbibed himself, it is probable that its reason may never arrive at maturity, nor ever be able to exercise a free choice. As well may the Chinese parents, after having contracted the muscles and the size of their daughter's feet, and thereby crippled her for life, say, when she arrived at mature age, that she was free to walk. To allow

the mental faculties to expand with freedom, no attempt should be made to gain assent to any proposition not clearly comprehended, nor should any speculative question be submitted to the decision of the individual, before his mind had been well stored with a knowledge of facts, and the reasoning powers duly exercised; a contrary course is a sure way of creating confusion in the mind, of confounding truth with error, and of preventing the habit of reflection, and the power of just discrimination from being, in after life acquired. The Bishop of London has lately addressed a Letter to the Inhabitants of London and Westminster, on the Profanation of the Sabbath and upon which, (as I intend shortly to publish a reply,) I will only remark that there is scarcely one of the irregularities complained of, which cannot be traced to the erroneous principle of education, of founding morals upon mysteries and doctrines, rather than upon the real nature of man. As a proof of the mischief which this error occasions, the members of the Mechanics' Institution have been compelled, in deference to public opinion, to recommend a discontinuance of the Sunday Morning Lectures in their Theatre; and while we admire the zeal which they manifest in promoting the interests of their excellent establishment, we must lament the existence out of doors of groundless prejudices and alarm, upon a subject which, if rightly understood,

would be hailed with joy by every sect and party. An awful charge has been made, that these Lectures were delivered during the hour of divine service, not only of the established church, but of all other religious denominations in the metropolis; but the following extract from a letter from Mr. Tooke, the honorary solicitor, to the secretary, which was read at the adjourned public meeting, demands some notice, because it introduces a name of no common celebrity. "You are in possession of my sentiments, that the Sunday Lectures are illegal; and as a most cordial and hearty friend of the Institution, I feel it incumbent on me to state my opinion, that meetings of a political or religious character in the theatre, are calculated to injure our valuable institution, and compromise its usefulness. I have had an opportunity of conferring with Mr. Brougham on the subject, who entirely concurs in the view entertained of it, by," &c.

If Mr. Brougham is half a century in advance of his age, the worthy honorary solicitor is a whole century behind; freedom had, therefore, between our two legal friends, but an unequal chance in their conference.

To endeavour to ascertain what character must belong to lectures delivered on a Sunday morning, to constitute their illegality, will be found a subject of curious inquiry. It appears then that in order

to render moral lectures inoffensive in the searching eye of the law, one qualification is an essential ingredient—namely, the admixture of some doctrine, ceremony, or mystery, not universally assented to; and certainly, when it is considered what an infinite variety of religions and sects are scattered over the earth, it may be thought fastidious to complain of the severity of the conditions.

The disciples of Confucius, and the devout Mussulmen, the believers in the incarnation of Veeshnu, the Jew who denies the authenticity of the New Testament, the Sublapsarians and the Armenians, the Mystics and Muggletonians, not to omit the followers of Johanna Southcott, and a thousand sects besides, are all permitted, as they ought to be permitted, to inculcate moral duties on a Sunday, in connection with their particular creeds, and their meetings are then considered as part and parcel of the law of the land. But if any parties assemble on that day, however peaceably, to examine into the laws of human nature, as developed in past history, or in the discoveries of modern times—to advocate the principles of equity and equal justice, and the endless advantages of cultivating benevolent feelings, and if such individuals, unwilling to obtrude their own speculations on controversial subjects, leave to each the un-

disturbed enjoyment of his own opinions, they are to be driven from place to place, and, if possible, dispersed. Fortunately however it is *not* possible—there is an elasticity in truth, by which it acquires additional energy from every attempt at suppression, and which enables it to bound forward with redoubled vigour.

Men of more enlarged views are too conscious of this, and therefore leave the ungracious task of attempting to stifle the voice of sincerity, to those whose minds, to repeat my former quotation, “were imbued with peculiar tenets before reason had arrived at maturity.”

Mr. Brougham stands so committed in the cause of mental liberty, that we are quite sure some misconception must have induced him to pronounce the lectures illegal; if not, then is it highly incumbent upon him instantly to move the repeal of an act more suited to the deepest gloom of the darker ages, than to a period when, as he nobly proclaimed in his memorable speech at the Glasgow University—“The great truth has finally gone forth to all the ends of the earth—that man shall no more render account to man for his belief, over which he has himself no control. Henceforward nothing shall prevail upon us to praise or blame any one for that which he can no more change, than he can the hue of

his skin, or the height of his stature." Here then is a distinct and open avowal of the important truth, for which Mr. Owen has been strenuously contending in his late addresses to the public.

Among the benefactors of mankind in our own days, the first rank is due to him who, regardless of any sacrifice, has devoted his life and fortune in their service; and braved the prejudices of pride and superstition, by an unreserved declaration of the truth. Twelve years have elapsed since that important event, when, in figurative but nervous language, he announced that the Rubicon was passed! But, alas! who has followed the bold adventurer? He who ranks second in the cause of free inquiry still lingers on the banks, alternately indicating a determination to cross the stream, and an apprehension of the consequences. This hesitation, arising from an ardent desire to promote the welfare of man, without prematurely arousing his prejudices, defeats its own end, and is, itself, the chief cause of the prolonged continuance of error, of poverty, and of crime. For with Mr. Brougham's commanding powers of eloquence, there is no truth which he could not establish in the public mind; but he either over-estimates the obstacles opposed to him, or undervalues his own extraordinary talents.

The monopoly of power, and of means to disseminate peculiar tenets, has been the bane of

society. To hinder others from declaring openly their opinions, is the very essence of tyranny. We boast much of the advantages of free trade in the exchange of silks, cottons, and wines; but a free trade in the interchange of opinions, would effect infinitely more good. As it is maintained, that by free trade the most valuable staple commodities in each country would be enjoyed by all; so will a free communication of opinion, among a people rising in intelligence, diffuse the good qualities of each, by the natural ascendancy which truth is destined to acquire.

Whatever may be our differences of opinion upon many topics, it is evident that the public mind, notwithstanding a few sectarian exceptions, is in favour of free discussion. But in order to accelerate the progress of knowledge, and to put an end to the puny attempts to disturb the peaceful meetings of any parties—and no assemblies were ever distinguished for more decorum than those which take place on the Sunday mornings* in this theatre—I trust that a public meeting will be convened by some influential characters for the purpose of forming a society, the objects of which should be,

* The Sunday Morning Lectures are at present delivered at "The Sans Souci," No. 2, Leicester Place, Leicester Square

First, To raise a fund for the purpose of erecting a spacious building, to be denominated "The Academy of Moral Science," and, in the meantime, to rent some hall or theatre of sufficient magnitude.

Secondly, To institute lectures, on Sundays and other days, upon all subjects more immediately affecting the physical, intellectual, and moral condition of man.

Thirdly, To create a fund for prizes for the best essays on the social system, education, and other subjects, connected with the objects of the Institution, and to procure the aid of respectable literary characters generally.

A curious exception has been taken to the advocates of the true principles of society, that they contravene the opinions of "the great, the good, and the wise, among men," and attempt to supplant institutions consecrated by time, and established by the wisdom of our ancestors; in short, that they pretend to be wiser than all preceding ages.

If the wisdom of our ancestors had not taught them to recognise newly discovered truths, and to discard those errors to which ignorance had given birth, we should not have been indebted to them for improvements which, however well they may have served their purpose for a time, are

destined to be superseded by still more important discoveries.

In the year 1615, a Florentine had the presumption and audacity to assert, contrary to the prevailing opinions of the learned, "the great, the good, and the wise, among men," and contrary to the conclusions of all preceding ages, that the earth revolved round the sun; and although he was threatened with death for his heresy, Galileo was right.

If there lurks an error in our present system, which few are now disposed to deny, all, including "the great, the good, and the wise," who have been trained and educated under the system, have imbibed, in a greater or less degree, the influence of that error, if not, why are they incapacitated from shewing whence it is, that in the midst of superfluity we are in poverty, and why, with the most ample means to secure happiness, contention, crime, and misery, are the characteristics of the age?

It is not unworthy of remark, that about the period when improvements in the mechanic arts, and in economical arrangements, have enabled man to supply his animal wants with facility, and left him ample time to improve the higher faculties of his nature, great advances have also been made in the discovery of superior methods of imparting knowledge, and in a more enlarged acquaintance with the human mind.

When this chaos of what is miscalled civilized society shall, by the diffusion of real knowledge, have settled into order, and mankind are in the enjoyment of those blessings which truth alone can bestow, they will look back with amazement upon an era when the complaints of poverty were heard in the midst of superabundance, and when such profound ignorance, on the most important of all the sciences, should exist contemporaneously with great attainments in other branches of philosophical inquiry. Would that it had been permitted the faithful historian to record, that after the long sought for truths of social science had been finally discovered, although contemned, because misunderstood, by the professors of religion—neglected by those esteemed the most wise—and banished from our seats of learning, they rose at last into public estimation, through the aid of a Mechanics' Institution !

THE END.

MR. OWEN'S REPLY TO A LETTER

SIGNED "AMICUS,"

That appeared in the Weekly Free Press, July, 1830.

SIR,

You ask me why I am "an enemy and opposer of the benevolent Jesus of Nazareth;" and "what it is in the Blessed Redeemer to which your convictions lead you to object? Is it his life? his character? or if not, then is it the peculiar doctrines which he promulgated? or the moral discipline which he enforced? Do you consider these doctrines less imbued with benevolence than his actions, or this moral discipline injurious to man's individual or social welfare?"

You afterwards say, "You, no doubt, deeply reflected upon the conduct and religion of Christ, before you presumed to include this religion in the general denunciation which you have uttered against all creeds; may I solicit an acquaintance with the result of your reflections, that I may be enabled, if possible, to account for the extraordinary union of benevolence and infidelity which your statements and actions have evinced you to possess." These are, indeed, questions of deep interest, not only to you and me, but to all who have been trained in any religious creed.

I will now endeavour to answer them, in such a manner, that no one hereafter, shall misunderstand the convictions which an

accurate observation of facts, a patient comparison of those facts with each other, and I believe unprejudiced deductions from them, have forced upon me, even (for a long time) in direct opposition to my wishes, for my early education made me very desirous to remain a sincere Christian according to the general acceptance of the term.

I have not, I cannot have, any personal enmity or hostility to any character, ancient or modern. Could it be possible for such an anomalous being as the devil is described to be, to exist under the circumstances in which it has been written, he came into his present state, I should not blame him, but pity his sufferings, and do all in my power to relieve him from them. Such are the feelings which the religion I am obliged to entertain, force upon me. I therefore, as expressed in my former letter, am not "an opponent of the benevolent Jesus of Nazareth."

"And what is there," you ask, "in the Blessed Redeemer to which your convictions lead you to object?"

I reply, whatever there is in the doctrines of those, who profess to be his followers, that is in opposition to facts, or to truth.

His life and his character, as they here have been handed down to us, appear according to the light of the period in which he lived, to have been irreproachable. Judging from the popular documents which we possess respecting him, he was a sincere reformer of the abuses of his time. He was benevolent and kind hearted, and desired to relieve the poor in their distress. He was opposed to hypocrisy, and sternly recommended what was just, and that all men should love one another.

This was going a great way for the time in which he lived, and that he was sincere in his desire to ameliorate the condition of mankind no one can doubt, if the testimony regarding him be true, for he was willing to sacrifice himself for the sins of the world, according to the phrase then used; that is, he felt so great a love for mankind, that, to relieve them from sin and misery, or, which is

the same, ignorance and poverty, he was willing, so far to oppose the popular prejudices of the day, as to run the risk of life, by teaching doctrines which he thought were true, in opposition to the generally received notions of the people.

He knew what was injurious in the effects, he desired to remove these and to introduce better. He perceived that the world was selfish or individualized; that it was full of envy hatred, strife, covetousness, and all uncharitableness; that these could not exist with real virtue and happiness; and that, before this change could be made in their character, they must be taught to acquire new thoughts and new feelings, to love one another in all sincerity; that, in fact, they must be born again into a new life, in which the purest charity and affection should pervade the whole man.

This he knew and taught, and in those days, it was a great deal for any one to know and to teach; but he knew not the real cause of these evils in man or the practical remedy for them.

He knew not the true origin or cause which perpetually generates envy, hatred, strife, malice, wars, murders, massacres, covetousness, and all uncharitableness; he knew that all these were grievous evils, and he desired to remove them. He knew also, that to make man happy, he must be taught to acquire affection and charity for every individual of his race.

As the "Benevolent Jesus of Nazareth" knew not the cause of the evil that he discovered in man, or of the miseries, which in consequence of it, pervades society; so neither do his followers know or suspect the real cause of the one or of the other, nor the practical remedy for them; and, therefore, these errors and evils remain now, and afflict man, and render the world as wretched as in all times past.

The great remedy of the "Benevolent Jesus of Nazareth," for all the evils of human life was in the precept "Love thy neighbour as thyself;" and whenever this precept can be applied to practice, the remedy thus proposed, will be, indeed, found all-powerful; for man will then know no sin, and the earth will be in peace, its inhabitants will be full of intelligence and happiness,—continually

increasing, as real knowledge advances,—will pervade all parts of the world, and then will the fulness of the time be come.

The first coming of Christ, when relieved from the mystery with which the ignorance and inexperience of our ancestors clothed all new and important knowledge, to make the multitude receive it with veneration—means the announcement of some truths essential for man to know, to prepare him to attain future happiness; but truths spoken in parables, and mixed with errors, and, therefore, incapable of being applied to practice; and, therefore, no man has yet been formed to “love his neighbours as himself.”

The second coming of Christ—means the open promulgation of simple truth, freed from all error relative to the nature of man, and the practice which he must adopt before he can “love his neighbour as himself,” before there can be “peace on earth and good will to man,” and when there will be no need for parables, mysteries, or miracles. Turn your thoughts inward, and ask yourselves—what do the signs of the times portend? Are there any indications of the period approaching when men may speak and hear the whole truth regarding themselves, undefiled by any error, and without parables, mysteries, or miracles?

Is not the earth, on this day, full of the means, if they were rightly directed, to give real knowledge, abundance of wealth, and the best and kindest feelings to all its inhabitants, and yet are not the latter, for want of truth devoid of error upon these subjects, afflicted with mystical creeds, with poverty almost too much for men to bear, and with all manner of inferior passions and feelings, and especially with selfishness and uncharitableness?

And shall the means of attaining this good for man be, day by day, before us, and shall these evils continue to overwhelm us with crime and misery?

The reply to these questions is my answer to the question “Why I appear to oppose the benevolent Jesus of Nazareth?”

The truths which the Christian history attribute to him; hidden,

as they are, in parables, confounding, as they have been made, by mysteries and miracles, and defiled, as they are, by pagan errors and imaginations, are totally unfit to relieve the world from its present evils, or to prevent their continuance or their accumulation, through all future ages.

The world of intellect has been growing for nearly 2,000 years since the "Benevolent Jesus of Nazareth" spoke in parables and in mysteries; new facts, new sciences, and new knowledge of various descriptions, have been subsequently made known. And these new facts, sciences, and knowledge, have so accumulated, as, now to render it necessary, nay, unavoidable, that new arrangements for forming the character of man, and uniting him with his fellows, in a superior and happy state of society, cannot be much longer delayed.

Will the followers of the "Benevolent Jesus of Nazareth" stand still, and adhere to olden times, when it was stated that men, for a season, owing to their ignorance or partial blindness, were compelled to see as through a glass, darkly? Or will they now bestir themselves in good earnest, and press forward to gain the prize of their high calling, to endeavour to pass through this valley of the shadow of death in which our friends and fellow men are, daily, dying of famine around us, and attain for themselves, and all future generations, a state and condition of life, in which there shall be no wailing or repining in our streets; but, in which, overwhelming circumstances shall be formed, to prevent the possible existence of ignorance, or poverty, or of crime?

I ask you, Amicus—you, who, by your letter, seem desirous of removing the dim glass now before your eyes, and the eyes of the whole Christian and religious world, will you press onward and endeavour to pass from darkness into light? from useless reveries into practical operations, founded on real knowledge, that will enable you to attain all you seek?

If you, and your friends, then, are in earnest in searching after truth for the truth's sake, arrange the means for a friendly intercourse between the conscientious religious, and conscientious

irreligious, that they may detect the errors which destroy brotherly love; which produce estrangement of mind and feelings, and which prevent the cordial co-operation of all for the benefit of each.

It is for you, and your friends, having the power in your hands, now to form these arrangements, in mercy to suffering humanity

Let us now lay aside our angry feelings; let us henceforth cease to apply abusive and unmeaning, but irritating terms to our fellow men, erring, as all of us have, from our birth. Can you, and your friends, expand your minds, and so far overcome your early prepossessions, as to bury all distinctive deriding terms in oblivion; and be content to become, indeed, and in very truth, searchers after truth for the truth's sake, and to be denominated simply, the "Lovers of Truth?"

If you, and your friends, can now do this, then may we expect the dawn of a new day to be near at hand, and a new superior life to be opening upon us.

Then shall all the opprobrious terms which have hitherto divided, which now divide man from man, cease from our lips, and be no longer used to prevent us from loving one another.

While the terms are applied, of Jew or Gentile, of Hindoo or Christian, of Mahomedan or Pagan, of Sceptic, of Deist, of Atheist, or any other, conveying an unkind and uncharitable feeling, by which men shall distinguish the errors of each other; it will continue beyond human power to make man to "love his neighbour as himself," or to receive within his bosom the feelings of pure and genuine charity.

You term me an infidel. An infidel to what? to the notions which, whether true or false, you have been compelled, without your knowledge or consent, to receive from infancy, and for which, you never can be entitled to merit, or can deserve demerit. No, Sir; I am no infidel! I abhor the term as well as the deed! To avoid

the latter, I have made the sacrifice of every private consideration! and I am yet ready to make all the sacrifice that man can make, to remove infidelity from the world! To make it unknown to man. How ardently do I feel while I write this, that no infidelity existed upon earth! That all men were placed under those circumstances in which they might successfully search for truth, and when they found it, they might in all simplicity and good faith, declare it openly and freely to all their fellowmen?

No, Sir! I am no infidel to truth! Willingly would I now sacrifice the few years I may yet live, to establish it in all its purity and never changing consistency, for the benefit of this and future generations.

But, Sir, to inconsistencies, of all descriptions, as they must be opposed to truth; to all mysteries beyond our comprehension, and to all miracles opposed to the laws of nature, I am compelled to be an infidel.

Yet, why should there be anger or the slightest irritation from man to man because of that, which by the constitution of his nature, he could not avoid?

He is compelled, by the constitution of his nature, which he did not create for himself, to receive his convictions and his feelings, and when he does not express these in all the genuineness of faithfulness, then, and then alone, is man an infidel.

An infidel to his own thoughts and feelings! an infidel to his fellow man, from whom he hides the truth! and an infidel to that power, whatever it may ultimately prove to be, which gave him being, and a living existence.

Now, Sir, those questions which you addressed to me in the true spirit of humanity, I have answered according to the bare knowledge I have received, and without there being, as far as I know myself, a particle of infidelity, admitted into them. And, perhaps, what I have stated, may now enable you to account for, as you

express it, the extraordinary union of benevolence and infidelity which, you say, my own statements and actions have evidenced me to possess.

With thanks for your letter, and a sincere desire for your happiness, permit me to subscribe myself,

Your friend and servant,

ROBERT OWEN.

Bedford Square, 16th July, 1830.

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